



CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY (BC AND YUKON DIVISION)

Attention Health/Business/Features/Assignment Editors:

BC Health and Environmental Powerhouses Call for Cosmetic Pesticide Ban as Election Campaign Ramps Up

VANCOUVER, April 20 /CNW/ - BC-based health and environmental groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the David Suzuki Foundation, are calling on all political parties to ban cosmetic pesticides as they campaign leading into May 12. With Ontario's landmark ban on more than 250 lawn and garden pesticides set to go into effect this Wednesday, the call seems timely.

"We must act in BC. With each month, new evidence comes forward citing the harmful effects of pesticides on human health, and on non-target species," says Warren Bell MD, past founding president of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE). "Economic arguments against phasing out pesticides are pure myth: landscaping businesses actually flourish when cosmetic pesticides are gone," states Bell.

This call is not something new; many lawn and garden pesticides have been banned since 2003 in Quebec. Prince Edward Island has announced its intent to ban lawn and garden pesticides come 2010 and New Brunswick has garnered much public support for a ban on lawn and garden pesticides.

A 2008 Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division shows that the majority of British Columbians support provincial legislation to restrict pesticide use. Kathryn Seely, Public Issues Manager, states, "this healthy public policy is popular with British Columbians. Approximately three-quarters of all British Columbians believe that pesticides have a negative impact on their health, as well as the health of their children and pets, and similar numbers are concerned about the environmental impacts of pesticides" (Canadian Cancer Society Advocacy Public Opinion Research Survey, 2008).

Delegates to the 2008 Union of BC Municipalities voted in favour of bringing in province-wide regulations to restrict the sales of cosmetic pesticides.

"Decision makers are aware that many of the cosmetic pesticides available to consumers in British Columbia to kill buttercups and dandelions contain active ingredients that are classified as possible human carcinogens, reproductive toxins, endocrine-disrupting chemicals or neurotoxins," according to Mae Burrows, executive director of Toxic Free Canada. "Bringing these toxic chemicals into the environment is unhealthy and unnecessary."

Eighteen BC cities and towns have already passed bylaws restricting cosmetic pesticide use, but municipalities lack the authority to regulate pesticide sales.

"We are asking all provincial parties to commit to banning lawn and garden pesticides to promote healthy BC communities," says Lisa Gue, Environmental Health Policy Analyst for the David Suzuki Foundation.

The NDP and Green Party have included a province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticides in their party platforms.

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The coalition of health and environmental groups has recommended provincial legislation that:

1. Bans the use and sale of pesticides used to improve the appearance of lawns and gardens, including a requirement for golf courses to phase out pesticides.
2. Allows exemptions only when necessary to protect public health and safety.
3. Allows municipalities to enact and enforce bylaws that are more restrictive of pesticide use than the provincial law.
4. Includes a 'white list' of low-risk pesticides that are permitted on lawns and gardens to promote public awareness.

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